



ON TRACK

The E-Bulletin of the Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers

www.marp.org

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The Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers, Inc. (MARP) is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit corporation established in 1973 to improve passenger train service, travel conditions for passengers, and to work for the preservation of historic rail stations.

Monthly meetings are held at locations around the state. Check the website for dates and venues. Everyone is welcome.

MARP EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

2012-2014

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Rosemary Horvath	<i>East/Central Region Chair</i>

*The Michigan Passenger Editor and Webmaster, Larry Sobczak
ON TRACK Editor, Kay Chase*

2013 MEETINGS

12 January – Williamston Depot-Museum

9 February – Capac Depot Museum

9 March – St. Johns Railroad Station

20 April – Niles

11 May – National Train Day

15 June – Vicksburg Historic Depot & Museum

20 July – Flushing Historical Depot

10 August – City of Milwaukee Train Ferry

14 September – Annual Meeting at Durand Union Station

October – Grand Haven (tentative)

November – Albion Amtrak Depot (tentative)

December – Executive Committee

Visit www.marp.org

Email marprail@yahoo.com

Welcome to 2013 !

With the ringing in of the New Year, MARP can look back at another year of strong growth and varied activity. We have a full slate of officers eager to build on the momentum. We have nearly 300 members, including 22 life members, giving their support and encouragement.

Grants from the Transportation for Michigan Coalition (Trans4M.org), along with member dues and donations and sound financial management, give MARP a healthy financial position

Jim Wallington, with the help of our members, arranged meetings in interesting places, including modern multi-modal stations and train stations, both historic and modern. Particularly interesting were the programs at the historic Michigan Central station in Chelsea and the beautifully “re-purposed” Union Station in Muskegon. A glance at the 2013 schedule in the left hand column shows another year of interesting venues, including a “sleep over” on the historic train ferry “City of Milwaukee” in August. Stay tuned for more details.

MARP’s quarterly publication *The Michigan Passenger* acquired a new editor in 2012 – Larry Sobczak – and a new look. We stuck our big toe into the world of electronic publication with the launch of the monthly online bulletin that you are now reading. ON TRACK is regularly emailed to more than 300 people interested in the future of passenger trains, as well as being posted on the MARP and Trans4M websites.

Networking & Partnering

Our membership in the Michigan Environmental Council and our work with the Transportation for Michigan Coalition (Trans4M) are paying dividends in increased awareness of intercity travel modes, particularly passenger trains and IndianTrails motor coaches. MARP participation was crucial to the success of 18 community forums held in all parts of the state during 2012 to explore the options people want for moving about our communities and our state now and in the future. Collaboration with Indian Trails has borne fruit with service to Charlevoix and to the ferry

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MARP MEMBER MEETING

Saturday, January 12

10:00 am – 1:00 pm

Williamston Depot-Museum

369 West Grand River

Williamston, MI 48895

Our guest speaker will be Z. Kris Wisniewski, Executive Director, [Eastern Border Transportation Coalition](#). Lunch will be at [Tavern 109](#), 115 East Grand River in Williamston. Details on the website www.marp.org Or leave a message at (269)388-3777.

Milwaukee Meeting Report

By Rich Vavra-Musser

The fall membership meeting of Midwest High Speed Rail Association was held October 20 in conjunction with the NARP Council of Delegates in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. MARP members in attendance included John Langdon and Robert Tischbein along with Rich Vavra-Musser and Dwight Phillips (members of the NARP Council of Delegates), and John DeLora and David Randall (both are NARP Vice-Presidents).

After highlighting the many positive things that have taken place recently that demonstrate increasing public support for passenger trains, along with the investment of billions of dollars in critical infrastructure improvements, speakers turned to the challenges of a difficult economy and a changing political and demographic landscape.



jchumacher.typepad.com

- Amtrak has achieved strong levels of market share vs. air travel in some key markets. For example, Amtrak has 96% market share in the LA-San Diego market, 89% for Chicago to Milwaukee and 69% between Seattle and Portland. This is proving that distances of under 500 miles are best served by rail. The challenge is to make the rail option accessible to more people.
- With the increase in gas prices and road congestion over the past few years, auto miles driven have dropped 6% since 2003 after increasing every year for several decades.
- For Millennials, there is a growing use of public transit, bicycles and walking to get to their destinations, up 15-40% between 2001 and 2009. The growing numbers of senior citizens have a need for more transportation choices as well.
- There is a significant shift seen in young people who are delaying getting their drivers' licenses. They would rather be connected through electronic devices than to own a car.
- A recent survey of Hiawatha Route passengers (Milwaukee- Chicago service) found that roughly 9% do not have access to a vehicle
- The number of US communities that have lost bus and air service – but still have train service – has tripled. Long distance trains have become a basic service, not just a "nice to have".
- The US population is expected to grow by 100 million by 2050, meaning citizens will need more choices for reach their travel destinations.

The challenge for us as interested citizens is to make sure our elected officials and business and community leaders understand the value and benefit of passenger train service to a growing segment of the population. The NARP meeting highlighted that we have made a lot of progress over the past four years. Passengers are telling us they want and need this improvement to continue. A 21st century economy will not succeed on a 20th century transportation system.

Additionally, we need to share the story of the continuing growth in ridership, along with how trains address mobility needs and issues for college students, business people and senior citizens.

Lastly, we need to ensure that we explain why we support a balanced transportation system and a fair approach to funding cross all modes. We must continue to advocate for:

- a. Improved and expanded conventional intercity rail service
- b. Construction and operation of at least one new high speed rail line in the next five years
- c. Increased connectivity among all modes of transportation
- d. Rail safety

Watch for your Membership Renewal letter in the mail soon!



SAVE THE DATE
Michigan Environmental Council

Legislative Breakfast 2013

Wednesday, January 30
8:30 - 10:00 a.m.

*Mackinac Room, 5th floor House Office Building
124 North Capitol, Lansing*

MARP members are invited to join with others in greeting new and returning lawmakers at the biennial legislative breakfast sponsored by the Michigan Environmental Council.

This is our opportunity to come together as one community and demonstrate our depth, breadth and diversity to lawmakers, as well as meet with allies from across Michigan.

Please plan to attend. This is a wonderful opportunity to speak informally with your state lawmaker and let them know why passenger trains are important to you. If you do plan to attend, please RSVP by January 15 to marprail@yahoo.com.

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dock for Beaver Island, as well as new Amtrak through-way connections from Tawas, Alpena, and Hancock.

In the coming year, MARP will work closely with the Michigan Environmental Council to develop a proposed Passenger Rail Campaign to strategically focus the work of the Transportation for Michigan Coalition (Trans4M) as it continues to seek improved transportation options for the citizens of Michigan. Also on the agenda is passage of legislation to refine the ways in which projects are analyzed and funded through the state infrastructure bank. We will be reaching out to MARP members across the state to help bring awareness of these issues to their lawmakers and community leaders.

Corridor & Station Improvements

Train ridership nationwide set new records in 2012. In Michigan, the *Blue Water*, in particular, has outpaced growth on routes throughout the country. Pontiac, Battle Creek, Dearborn, Troy, Grand Rapids, and East Lansing have, or soon will have, new modern, passenger-friendly stations. Late breaking news this week reveals plans for a new station in Port Huron. Trains are traveling at 110-mph between Kalamazoo and Porter, Indiana. Track repairs have improved reliability on the *Wolverine* route and work will soon begin in earnest to bring the 135 miles between Kalamazoo and Dearborn up to 110-mph as well. Agreement was reached in May to move forward with the long-awaited **West Detroit Connection**. The recently-funded **Indiana Gateway** project will relieve some of the congestion in that area. Over the next 18 months the **Chicago-Detroit/Pontiac Passenger Rail Corridor Program** will evaluate major improvements to reduce travel times to Chicago for all three Michigan routes.



[Click Here for Information](#)

Our Mailing Address Has Changed!

Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers
P.O. Box 180076
Utica, MI 48318-0076

Our email address remains: marprail@yahoo.com
Visit us on the web at: www.marp.org

View from elsewhere . . .

"Wayne, I'll get the money. You get me the passengers."

-- Former Maine Senator Olympia Snowe is reported to have said this when approached by Wayne Davis about extending the *Downeaster* route. Revenue service to Freeport and Brunswick opened to great fanfare on 1 Nov 2012, thanks in no small measure to the efforts of Mr. Davis, President TrainRiders/Northeast and NARP Council Representative. Video at tinyurl.com/marp00061

"As if to underline the increasingly bipartisan support for passenger trains, two Amtrak start-ups are taking place in—and with funds from—states with conservative Republican governors. The Downeaster extension to Freeport and Brunswick, Maine, began November 1, and Washington-Norfolk, Virginia, service will begin December 12. America's passengers are not divided along Democratic and Republican lines; we all ride the same trains, and rely on the same transit subways and streetcars and commuter railroads."

-- NARP's Ross Capon in a post-election message.

"For 2013, there is no longer a financial bias in the federal tax code against public transit use. It is our hope that in the new Congress, legislation will pass to make the public transit commuter benefit parity permanent."

-- APTA President Michael Melaniphy, commenting on the provision in the "fiscal cliff" legislation signed by Obama on January 2 that increases the commuter tax benefit from \$125 to \$240 per month, making the transit benefit equal to the federal tax benefit for parking.



Photo by Larry Krieg

MARP members Jeanie Merckel (on the left) and Chuck Merckel (on the right) are pictured with Amtrak's Harold Kirman and Greg Godfrey, Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent Train Movement, in a part of the Great Hall that few passengers ever see. Jeanie and Chuck are part of the Chicago Union Station Passenger Action Taskforce (CUSPAT) initiated by MARP Vice-Chair Larry Krieg. CUSPAT met with station personnel, observed procedures, and interviewed passengers, ultimately coming up with a set of recommendations to improve way-finding and boarding procedures within the station. *"The Chicago Union Station Passenger Action Taskforce has made progress on several fronts, but still faces numerous challenges,"* according to Larry Krieg. Look for Larry's report to follow in the near future.

Share Your Transportation Story and Win Dollars for MARP!

What would you like to tell the world about train travel in Michigan? – the good, the bad, the ugly. Can you ride your bike to station? Does the train go where you want to go? What do you want decision-makers to know?



Trans4M, the statewide transportation coalition of which MARP is a founding member, is collecting videos (at least 25 seconds in length) to tell Michigan's transportation story. We'll use the videos to help state legislators make wise decisions about Michigan's transportation future.

Capture your transportation story on any video device. We'll post it on Trans4M's *Lights, Camera, Transportation* YouTube channel. You will be entered in a raffle to win one of twenty \$50 gift cards. In addition, the organization with the most videos will receive \$1,000 towards its transportation initiative of choice.

How to submit:

Step 1 – Capture your video and story. Check out the [contest rules](#)

Step 2 – [Fill out the form](#)

Step 3 – Submit your video to marprail@yahoo.com

Step 4 – Check out the *Lights, Camera, Transportation* YouTube Channel

Contest deadline has been extended through February. More information at trans4m.org/share-your-story

